

PROJECT CENSORED

THE MOST UNDEREXPOSED NEWS IN AMERICA

According to the Project Censored voting team, these are the top 25 news stories that should have received major coverage in the US mass media last year, but didn't.

Sonoma State University's Project Censored team has released its list of the top 25 most under-covered news stories in the United States during 1999–2000. Media students, faculty staff and community experts are involved in the selection, screening and evaluation process. These top 25 stories, as ranked by Project Censored's national judges, are summarised below in edited form. We recommend that you visit the website projectcensored.org for additional text, references and updates. — Editor

1. World Bank and Multinational Corporations Seek to Privatisise Water

Global consumption of water is doubling every 20 years, more than twice the rate of human population growth. According to the United Nations, more than one billion [1,000,000,000] people already lack access to fresh drinking water. If current trends persist, by 2025 the demand for fresh water is expected to rise by 56 per cent more than the amount of water that is currently available.

Multinational corporations recognise these trends and are trying to monopolise water supplies around the world. Monsanto, Bechtel and other global multinationals are seeking control of world water systems and supplies. The World Bank recently adopted a policy of water privatisation and full-cost water pricing. This policy is causing great distress in many Third World countries, which fear that their citizens will not be able to afford for-profit water.

San Francisco's Bechtel Enterprises was contracted to manage the water system in Cochabamba, Bolivia, after the World Bank required Bolivia to privatise. When Bechtel pushed up the price of water, the entire city went on a general strike. The military killed a 17-year-old boy and arrested the water rights leaders. But after four months of unrest, the Bolivian government forced Bechtel out of Cochabamba. Bechtel Group Inc., a corporation with a long history of environmental abuses, now contracts with the city of San Francisco to upgrade the city's water system. Bechtel employees are working side by side with government workers in a privatisation move that activists fear will lead to an eventual take-over of San Francisco's water system.

Maude Barlow, chair of the Council of Canadians, Canada's largest public advocacy group, and a director of the International Forum on Globalization, states: "Governments around the world must act now to declare water a fundamental human right and prevent efforts to privatise, export and sell for profit a substance essential to all life."

Governments are signing away their control over domestic water supplies by participating in trade treaties such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and in institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). These agreements give transnational corporations the unprecedented right to the water of signatory companies. Water-related conflicts are springing up around the globe. Monsanto estimates that water will become a multibillion-dollar market in the coming decades.

References

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- Jim Shultz (JShultz@democracycctr.org), "Water Fallout", *Canadian Dimension, February 2000*; "Water Fallout: Bolivians Battle Globalization", *In These Times, May 15, 2000*, www.inthesetimes.com; "Just Add Water", *THIS, July/August 2000*
- Vandana Shiva, "Monsanto's Billion-Dollar Water Monopoly Plans", *Canadian Dimension, February 2000*, www.purefood.org/Monsanto/waterfish.cfm

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2. OSHA Fails to Protect United States Workers

United States labour laws are poorly enforced and fail to meet the basic human rights of US workers. Each year, about 6,000 workers die on the job from accidents and another 50,000 to 70,000 workers die annually from "occupationally acquired diseases".

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is not capable of effectively overseeing US workplaces. The entire federal and state worker health and safety apparatus involves just 2,300 inspectors who must cover America's 102 million workers in 6.7 million workplaces. That comes to one inspector for every 44,348 workers. Theoretically, it would take OSHA 110 years to inspect each workplace under its jurisdiction just once.

Needed by labour and despised by business, OSHA may be workers' best friend in government, but critics say OSHA has never been weaker or less worker-friendly. Recent studies show that United States labour laws have loopholes, are poorly enforced and fail to meet human rights standards required of other countries.

In these times, it is hard to get the attention of an OSHA inspector as there are so few of them, and OSHA is woefully ill-equipped to monitor the workplaces of America.

Reference

• Christopher D. Cook (cdcook@igc.apc.org), "Losing Life and Limb on the Job", *The Progressive*, February 2000, www.progressive.org/cook0200.htm

3. US Army's Psychological Operations Personnel Worked at CNN

From June 1999 to March 2000, CNN employed military specialists in "psychological operations" (Psyops) in their Southeast TV bureau and CNN radio division.

CNN had hosted a total of five interns from US Army Psyops: two in television, two in radio and one in satellite operations. The military/CNN personnel belonged to the airmobile Fourth Psychological Operations Group, stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. One of the main tasks of this group of almost 1,200 soldiers and officers is to spread "selected information".

The propaganda group was involved in the Gulf War, the war in Bosnia and the crisis in Kosovo. The military personnel stayed with CNN for at least two weeks "to get to know the company and to broaden their horizons".

Still, the Psyops people in Arlington were not entirely satisfied with news handling during the war on Serbia. In their opinion, too much information about the results of the bombings came to the surface.

CNN reports and other media coverage of the war in Kosovo have attracted criticism for being one-sided, overly emotional, oversimplified and too heavily reliant on NATO officials. On the other hand, journalists have complained about the lack of reliable information from NATO; for almost all of them, it was impossible to be on the battlefield and file first-hand reports.

Reference

• Alexander Cockburn, "CNN and Psyops", *CounterPunch*, February 16 and March 1, 2000, www.counterpunch.org/cnnpsyops.html

4. Did the United States Deliberately Bomb the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade?

Elements within the CIA may have deliberately targeted the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, without NATO approval, because it was serving as a rebroadcast station for the Yugoslavian Army. The London *Observer* and the Copenhagen *Politiken* [dates not given] reported that, according to senior US and European military sources, NATO knew very well where the Chinese Embassy was located and listed it as a "strictly prohibited target" at the beginning of the war.

The *Observer* stated that the CIA and its British equivalent, MI6, had been listening to communications from the Chinese Embassy routinely since it moved to its new site in 1996. The Chinese Embassy was taken off the prohibited target list after NATO detected it sending Yugoslavian Army signals to forces in the field.

"Nearly everyone involved in NATO air operations (radio) signals command knows that the bombing was deliberate," said Jens Holsoe of *Politiken*, lead investigative reporter with the news team reporting on the story. President Clinton called the bombing a "tragic mistake" and said it was the result of a mix-up. NATO claimed that they were using old maps and got the address wrong. However, *Observer* reporters quoted a Naples-based flight controller who said the NATO maps used during the campaign had correctly identified the Chinese Embassy.

A French Ministry of Defence report stated that the flight that targeted the Chinese Embassy was not under NATO command but, rather, was an independent US bombing raid.

In July 1999, CIA director George Tenet testified before Congress that, of the 900 sites struck by NATO during the bombing campaign, the only one targeted by the CIA was the Chinese Embassy.

References

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• Joel Bleifuss (itt@inthesetimes.com), "A Tragic Mistake?", *In These Times*, December 12, 1999, www.inthesetimes.com

5. United States Taxpayers Underwrite Global Nuclear Power Plant Sales

The US tax-supported Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im) is solidly backing major US nuclear contractors such as Westinghouse, Bechtel and General Electric in its efforts to seek foreign markets for nuclear reactors.

Between 1959 and 1993, Ex-Im spent US\$7.7 billion to help sell American-made reactors abroad. Most countries do not have the capital to buy nuclear power, so contractors, in order to be competitive, provide 100 per cent of the financing. Ex-Im offers terms too good for Third World and Eastern European buyers to pass up. If the host country defaults on its loan, Ex-Im steps in with American taxpayer dollars.

Westinghouse built the Bataan nuclear power facility in The Philippines in 1985 at a cost of \$1.2 billion, 150 per cent above its

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— Jens Holsoe, *Politiken*

projections. However, the Bataan plant was never brought on line due to the fact that it was near an active volcano. Despite this, The Philippines still pays about \$300,000 a day in interest on the Ex-Im loan that funded the project. Should The Philippines default, US taxpayers will pick up the tab.

"American contractors are selling a product that most people don't want," says Dave Martin of the Toronto-based Nuclear Awareness Campaign. US taxpayers are subsidising this industry. Without Ex-Im, which offers terms just too good for Third World countries to pass up, American firms would not succeed in selling nuclear power plants worldwide.

Reference

• Ken Silverstein and Ian Urbina (iurbina2@aol.com), "Pushing the Nuclear Plants: A US Agency Hooks Foreign Clients", The Progressive, March 2000, www.progressive.org

6. International Report Blames United States and Others for Genocide in Rwanda

Bill Clinton and his administration allowed the genocide of 500,000 to 800,000 people in Rwanda in 1994. In a clear effort to avoid responsibility and embarrassment, the Clinton administration has refused to acknowledge its role in failing to prevent the genocide in Rwanda.

This allegation comes from the recent report released in July 2000 by a panel affiliated with the Organization for African Unity (OAU). OAU set up a panel comprised of two African heads of state, chairwomen of the Swedish Committee for UNICEF, a former Chief Justice to the Indian Supreme Court and a former Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations.

The panel was asked to review the 1994 genocide, the actions preceding the massacre and the world's response to the killings. The panel concluded that the nations and international bodies that should have attempted to stop the killing chose not to do so. The report convincingly condemns the United Nations, Belgium (a former colonial occupier), France (which maintained close relations with Rwanda) and the United States.

The panel found that after the genocide began, the Clinton administration chose not to acknowledge that it was taking place.

According to the report, the killings could have been stopped before they began. The report refers to the well-known fax that Canadian Lieutenant-General Romeo Dallaire, commander of the UN peacekeeping troops in Rwanda, sent to the UN three months before the genocide began. In it, Dallaire warned that an extermination campaign was coming. He asked for an additional 3,000 UN troops, which would have brought the total to 5,000—a number likely to have been able to prevent the genocide. However, Madeleine Albright played a key role in the UN Security Council in blocking the troop expansion.

References

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• Ellen Ray, "The Role of the US Military", *Covert Action Quarterly*, Spring/Summer 2000
• OAU report, www.oau-oua.org/Document/ipep/ipep.htm

7. Independent Study Points to Dangers of GE Foods

In 1998, Arpad Pusztai, a researcher at Rowett Research Institute in Aberdeen, Scotland, performed the first independent, non-industry-sponsored study analysing genetically engineered food and its effects on mammals. The study had been undertaken to determine whether or not the spliced genes themselves could be damaging to the mammal ingesting them. However, preliminary data from the study suggested something even more startling.

Pusztai's study found that rats fed transgenic potatoes (artificially bioengineered to include a gene from another species) showed evidence of organ damage, thickening of the small intestine and poor brain development. The potatoes used in the study had been genetically engineered to contain lectin, a sugar-binding protein, to make the plants pest-resistant. The adverse reactions only occurred in the group that was fed the transgenic potatoes, and were not caused by the added lectin but by the process of genetic engineering itself.

In August 1998, Pusztai appeared on the British television program *The World in Action* to report the findings of his study. In an attempt to quell the resulting public furor, Rowett Institute director Philip James (who had approved Pusztai's TV appearance) said the research didn't exist. He fired Pusztai, broke up his research team, seized the data and halted six other similar projects. It came out later that Monsanto, a leading US biotech firm, had given the Rowett Institute a US\$224,000 grant prior to Pusztai's interview.

Evidence emerged to support the legitimacy of Pusztai's research. The British medical journal *Lancet* published a peer-reviewed paper that Pusztai had co-authored, supporting the research.

Back in 1992, the US Food and Drug Administration determined that genetically engineered foods were in most cases "the same as or substantially similar to substances commonly found in food" and thus are not required to undergo specific safety tests prior to entering the market.

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Monitor, January–February 2000, www.essential.org/monitor/mm2000/mm0001.05.html

• Joel Bleifuss, "No Small (Genetic) Potatoes", *In These Times*, January 10, 2000, www.inthesetimes.com

8. Drug Companies Influence Doctors and Health Organisations to Push Medications

More than 130 million prescriptions were written in 1999 [in the USA] for depression and mental health-related symptoms at a cost of US\$8.58 billion. Physicians know that antidepressants are only part of the answer for mental health, but marketing by drug companies has created the mythology of pills as cure-alls. However, a 1999 federal research study found that the newer antidepressants were effective in only half of the cases and outperformed placebos by only 18 per cent.

Drug companies spend \$5 billion annually to send sales representatives to doctors' offices. Sales reps keep FBI-style dossiers on physicians, which include information such as the names of

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family members, golf handicaps and clothing preferences. Hard sales tactics and small gifts are part of the pitch. In addition, pharmaceutical companies provide perks and outright compensation to doctors for their participation in the prescribing of particular drugs to their mental health patients.

On another front, pharmaceutical companies are reaping big profits by promoting forced drug use through programs at the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI). *Mother Jones* researchers used internal documents to prove that NAMI received \$11.72 million from the psychiatric drug industry in just two-and-a-half years. NAMI's leading donor is Eli Lilly and Company, the maker of Prozac.

Reference

• Ken Silverstein, "Prozac.org", *Mother Jones*, *MOJO Wire Magazine*, November/December 1999, www.motherjones.com/mother_jones/ND99/nami.html

9. EPA Plans to Disburse Toxic/Radioactive Wastes into Denver's Sewage System

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) plans to pump toxic waste water into Denver's sewer system in order to clean up a Superfund site at the Lowry landfill.

Between 1950 and 1980 at the Lowry landfill near Denver, millions of gallons of hazardous industrial wastes were dumped into shallow unlined pits. The EPA declared the 480-acre site a Superfund site in 1984. Now the EPA wants to treat the contaminated groundwater at the landfill and discharge it into the Denver metro sewage system. The sewage system would then use the sludge from the treated water to fertilise Colorado farmlands.

Citizen groups say that the landfill is widely contaminated with highly radioactive plutonium and other deadly wastes. Adrienne Anderson, a lawyer and instructor at the University of Boulder, stated that the EPA's plan is a way to "legally pump plutonium into the sewer line". Anderson and her students have accrued some 200,000 files on the Lowry landfill.

One document—"Preliminary Evaluation of Potential Department of Energy Radioactive Wastes", dated December 13, 1991—showed that the levels of plutonium and radioactive americium detected at the Lowry landfill were 10 to 10,000 times greater than the average levels reported for a nuclear weapons plant in that area. The document had been released by the Lowry Coalition, a group of corporations and government agencies that dumped materials at the site.

References

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10. Silicon Valley Uses Immigrant Engineers to Keep Salaries Low

Highly skilled immigrant workers in Silicon Valley are being exploited by employers. Existing immigration law sets a cap on the number of H1-B visas the industry can use to hire immigrant engineers, so this year the Silicon Valley electronics giants have been pushing for more H1-B workers.

While H1-B-status labourers boost corporate bottom lines, there

is a devastating effect on the workers themselves.

AFL-CIO Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson accuses the industry of using the H1-B visa program to keep their workers in a position of dependence. She points out that these workers are often hired under individual contracts, which by US law means they don't have the right to organise. The H1-B program gives employers the power not only to hire and fire workers but to grant legal immigration status as well. If an employer does not like something a worker does, the employer has the power to deport the worker. Labour advocates say the problem is not a labour shortage but the industry's unwillingness to pay the salaries that American high-tech workers demand.

Reference

• David Bacon (dbacon@igc.apc.org), "Silicon Valley Sweatshops", *Washington Free Press*, July–August 2000

11. UN Corporate Partnerships: A Human Rights Peril

In a move to make the United Nations more corporate-friendly, officials are calling for UN–corporate partnerships. The UN's new partners include multinational giants like McDonald's, Disney, Dow and Unocal. A business-friendly ideology at the UN

is based on a desire to gain favour with the United States, the UN's largest funder, and to raise money through private sources.

UN agencies have entered into an array of partnerships with giant corporations, including many which citizens movements have denounced for violations of human and labour rights.

Human rights groups around the world are increasingly challenging the new partnership arrangements for fear that these new relationships will undermine the UN's ability to serve as a counterbalance to global corporate power.

Reference

• Danielle Knight, "Perilous Partnerships", *Multinational Monitor*, March 2000, www.essential.org/monitor/mm2000/00march/economics1.html

12. Cuba Leads the World in Organic Farming

Cuba has developed one of the most efficient organic agriculture systems in the world. Due to the US embargo and the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba was unable to import chemicals or modern farming machines to uphold a high-tech corporate farming culture. The lost buying power for agricultural imports led to a general diversification within farming on the island.

Cuba's new revolution is founded upon the development of an organic agricultural system. The migration of small farms and gardens into densely populated urban areas has also played a crucial role in feeding citizens. Havana, with nearly 20 per cent of Cuba's population, now has more than 8,000 officially recognised gardens, which are in turn cultivated by more than 30,000 people and cover nearly 30 per cent of the available land. The quality and quantity of crop yields have increased—at a lower cost and with fewer health and environmental side effects than ever.

References

• Alison Auld, "Farming with Fidel", *Sustainable Times*, Fall 1999
• Hugh Warwick, "Cuba's Organic Revolution", *Third World Resurgence*, issues 118–119, Spring 2000

Cuba has developed one of the most efficient organic agriculture systems in the world.

13. The WTO is an Illegal Institution

Something not mentioned by the corporate press, or most of the 1,200 groups from 85 countries that opposed the World Trade Organization (WTO) policies during and after the Seattle demonstrations in 1999, is the fact that the WTO is actually an illegal institution.

The WTO was put in place following the signing, in 1994 in Morocco, of a "technical document" negotiated behind closed doors. Following the Morocco meeting, the agreement was either rubber-stamped or never formally ratified by national governments, yet membership in the WTO requires acceptance of its precepts without exception.

The 1994 agreement has been casually embodied in international law, bypassing the democratic process in mostly all of the member countries. It blatantly overrides national laws and constitutions while providing extensive powers to global banks and multinational corporations. This totalitarian intergovernmental body has been empowered under international law to "police" country-level economic and social policies, suppressing the rights of national governments. Also, the WTO neutralises the authority of UN agencies, such as the International Labor Organization, designed to oversee international trade conduct. It furthermore contradicts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Reference

• Michel Chossudovsky, "Seattle and Beyond: The Illegality of the WTO", Covert Action Quarterly, Spring-Summer 2000, www.caq.com

14. Europe Holds Companies Environmentally Responsible

The European Union will soon hold any company that enters the European market responsible for the environmental impacts of its products.

Known as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), the new EU rules will make manufacturers change product design, the materials used in manufacturing and the methods by which products are disposed to ensure environmental integrity. The regulations will cover products that contain electrical circuits, and the phasing out of toxic metals used in the production of consumables like refrigerators and computers.

Reference

• Joel Bleifuss, "The Big Stick Approach", In These Times, April 17, 2000, www.inthesetimes.com

15. Gerber Uses WTO to Suppress Laws Promoting Breastfeeding

Gerber Baby Foods Corporation has used the World Trade Organization to suppress a Guatemalan law that encouraged mothers to breastfeed their children.

In 1983, the government of Guatemala passed a law and regulations with the goal of inspiring new mothers to breastfeed their infants and understand fully the harm that could be done to their baby if they used breast-milk substitutes.

Gerber objected to Guatemala's law. It refused to remove its trademark picture of a smiling chubby baby from its product labels. It also refused to add a phrase to the labels saying that breast milk is superior. In November 1993, Gerber lost its appeal but opened up a new line of attack on Guatemala, stating that the law was an "expropriation of Gerber's trademark". In 1995, when

the World Trade Organization came into being, Gerber dropped its claim regarding expropriation and began to challenge Guatemala before a WTO tribunal. Guatemala realised it was in battle with an immense power. The government changed its law to concede to Gerber's marketing practices.

Reference

• Peter Montague (peter@rachel.org), "Corporate Rights vs Human Need", Rachel's Environment and Health Weekly, November 18, 1999, www.rachel.org/bulletin/index.cfm?St=4

16. Human Genome Project Opens the Door to Ethnically Specific Bioweapons

The Human Genome Project may now open the door to the development and use of genetic weapons targeted at specific ethnic groups. This project is currently being conducted under the auspices of the US Energy Department, which also oversees America's nuclear weapons arsenal.

Current estimates of the cost of developing a "gene weapon" have been placed at around \$50 million—well within the capabilities of covert government programs.

On November 15, 1998, the London Times reported that Israel claims to have successfully developed a genetically specific "ethnic bullet" that targets Arabs. When an Israeli government spokesman was asked, he did not deny that they had them.

References

• Roy Blake, "Genetic Bullets, Ethnically Specific Bioweapons", Washington Free Press, Jan/Feb 2000
• Greg Bishop, "Ethnic Weapons for Ethnic Cleansing", Konformist, March 2000, www.konformist.com

17. IMF and World Bank Staff Tightly Connected to New Yugoslav Government

The G-17 is a Yugoslav economists group that supported presidential candidate Vojislav Kostunica and wrote the policy statements for the post-election economic reform of

Yugoslavia.

The impression the G-17 likes to give is that it is an independent and Yugoslav-oriented group. The reality is vastly different. It is actually funded through the Washington-based Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE)—a group set up through the National Endowment for Democracy, a CIA-related group created in 1983. The G-17 group calls for Yugoslavia to work more closely with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) towards the development of a market economy. Former Eastern bloc neighbouring countries that have followed this tactic have had massive wage deflation and increased poverty for the bulk of their citizens.

According to writer and IMF researcher Professor Michel Chossudovsky, the G-17 paradigm economic program for Yugoslavia contains the same measures the IMF forced on Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Peru and many other nations. The results have been social and economic devastation.

References

• Christian Parenti, "Colony Kosovo", San Francisco Bay Guardian, August 23, 2000, www.sfbg.com/News/34/47/47wvko.html
• Michel Chossudovsky (chossudovsky@videotron.ca) and Jared Israel (Emperors1000@aol.com), "The International Monetary Fund and the Yugoslav Election", Emperor's New Clothes, September 28, 2000, emperors-clothes.com/indexe.htm

Something not mentioned by the corporate press, or most of the 1,200 groups from 85 countries that oppose WTO policies, is the fact that the WTO is actually an illegal institution.

18. Indigenous People Challenge Private Ownership and Patenting of Life

There is a portion of the WTO agreement, called Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), that will allow multinational corporations to apply for patents on living creatures and life processes. However, indigenous peoples from around the world believe that private ownership of life forms is unnatural and inappropriate.

On July 25, 1999, a gathering of indigenous peoples signed a document that called for an amendment to the TRIPs agreement, which would be put as a priority item on the agenda at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle. The document eloquently states that all life forms and life-creating processes are sacred and should not be subject to proprietary ownership.

Specifically targeted is Article 27.3b of TRIPs, which will denigrate and undermine rights to cultural and intellectual heritage, destroy plant, animal and genetic resources and even discriminate against indigenous ways of thinking and behaving. The people are very specific that the amendments to Article 27.3b should clearly prohibit the patenting of plants and animals. They aim to ensure that a system is created that will protect knowledge, innovations and practices in farming, agriculture, health and medical care and conserve the biodiversity of indigenous peoples and farmers.

References

- Kimberly Wilson, "Indigenous Peoples' Statement on the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) and the WTO Agreement", GeneWatch, October 1999
- "A Call for Support for African Group Proposal on TRIPs Article 27.3(b) on Patenting of Life", Third World Resurgence, nos. 110, 111, Fall 1999

19. United States Using Dangerous Fungus to Eradicate Coca Plants in Colombia

The United States plans to deploy, or may have already deployed, new biological weapons for the war on drugs that seriously threaten both humans and the environment.

The bioweapon is *Fusarium* EN-4, a plant fungus used in many chemical weapons developed by the United States in 1950s and '60s. *Fusarium* is being redesigned to attack coca, cannabis and opium crops in producer countries in the Third World. This work is proceeding despite evidence that the *fusarium*, if deployed, will have profound and disastrous impacts on the humans and ecologies of the countries in which they are used.

Pathogens developed long ago at Fort Detrick, Maryland, the centre for the US biowarfare program, were frozen but not destroyed when the facility was closed by President Nixon in 1969. Veterans of the Soviet biological warfare effort are now working on this research with UN funding in order to shield the United States from charges of violating the internationally negotiated Biological Weapons Convention.

Peru has already banned the testing and/or deployment of the *fusarium* fungus. Colombia, however, was forced to accept spraying as part of a \$1.8 billion aid package that was approved by US Congress in July 2000.

Eduardo Posada, president of the Colombian Center for

International Physics, found *fusarium* to be "highly toxic". According to his data, the mortality rate among hospital patients who were immune-deficient and infected by the fungus was 76 per cent. "The mutated fungi can cause disease in a large number of crops, including tomatoes, peppers, flowers, corn and vines," he said. He added that the mutated genus could stay in the ground for 40 years.

Reference

- Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St Clair, "McCaffery's Plagues: New Biowar on Drugs", *CounterPunch*, Observer, London, June 1-15, 2000 and July 2, 2000

20. Disabled Most Likely to be Victims of Serious Crime

Research consistently finds that people with substantial disabilities suffer from violent and other major crime at rates 4 to 10 times higher than that of the general population.

Estimates are that around five million disabled people are victims of serious crime annually in the United States. Disabilities often make people easy targets for crime and abuse.

Several studies suggest that 80-85% of criminal abuse of residents in institutions is never reported to authorities. Evidence also shows that when these crimes are reported, there are lower rates of police follow-up, prosecutions and convictions.

Reference

- Dan Sorensen (dsorensen@dmhhq.state.ca.us), "The Invisible Victims", Tash Newsletter, March 2000, 158.96.231.221/dmhsearch/dmhquery.asp

21. US Military Bombing Range Destroys Korean Village Life

Every weekday for the past 50 years, from 8 o'clock in the morning to 11 o'clock at night, US fighter planes in Korea have dropped 400 to 700 bombs on the Koon-ni range less than one mile from local villages.

The targets for the bombs are islands in the beautiful Aia Bay where the people derive their livelihoods by fishing. As the A10 and F-16 US fighter aircraft swoop over the countryside, they drop depleted uranium (DU) shells. The DU shells add radioactive contamination to the other

toxic wastes and oil that have been accumulating near these villages for the last half-century.

Throughout the years, at least 12 people have been killed and numerous others have been wounded. The number of cancer cases is disproportionately large and growing, and women are increasingly experiencing miscarriages and birth defects. Noise levels have been measured off the decibel scale. Mental health is a serious issue, with constant tension from noise.

Lockheed-Martin now owns the Koon-ni range. This kind of privatisation of the military comes as no surprise, because 50 years of dropping bombs and spraying bullets has been very lucrative for arms manufacturers.

For the good part of 50 years, most Koreans knew nothing about this, but protests are growing.

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- Corporate media coverage: Christian Science Monitor, June 2, 2000; New York Times, June 18, 2000

There is a portion of the WTO agreement, called Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), that will allow multinational corporations to apply patents on living creatures and life processes.

22. US Repressed Marijuana Tumour Research

A Spanish medical team's study released in Madrid in February 2000 has shown that tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the active chemical in marijuana, destroys tumours in lab rats. The research was conducted by a medical team led by Dr Manuel Guzman of Complutense University in Madrid.

These findings, however, are not news to the US Government. A study in Virginia in 1974 yielded similar results but was suppressed by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The 1974 study—published in an article, "Antineoplastic Activity of Cannabinoids", in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* in 1975—does not mention breast cancer tumours. These were featured in the only newspaper story ever to appear about the 1974 study. The *Washington Post* story (August 18, 1974) read in part: "The active chemical agent in marijuana curbs the growth of three kinds of cancer in mice and may also suppress the immunity reaction that causes rejection of organ transplants... The researchers found that THC slowed the growth of lung cancers, breast cancers and a virus-induced leukemia in laboratory mice, and prolonged their lives by as much as 36 percent."

In 1976, President Ford put an end to all public cannabis research and granted exclusive research rights to major pharmaceutical companies. In 1983, the Reagan/Bush administration tried to persuade US universities and researchers to destroy all cannabis research work done between 1966 and 1976 as well as compendiums in libraries.

References

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- *Raymond Cushing (raymondcushing@ireland.com), "Pot Shrinks Tumors; Government Knew in '74", Alternet, May 31, 2000, www.alternet.org/*

23. Very Small Levels of Chemical Exposures Can be Dangerous

For years, the public has been told that a low level of chemical exposure holds no significant risk to humans. However, the results of recent studies show that even small amounts of chemicals (in drinking water, in foods) may in fact be very damaging.

New research in the field of endocrine disrupters has shown that chemicals like dioxin, PCBs and DDT act at very low levels to interfere with normal hormone functions of the body. Very low levels of these chemicals have been linked to a wide variety of health problems, such as neurological and developmental problems, immune system disruption, learning disabilities, birth defects and other reproductive anomalies.

According to Dr Pete Myers, co-author of *Our Stolen Future*, chemical attacks against foetal development work because some chemicals act as imposters, insinuating themselves in the body's natural hormone system that normally directs foetal development. What is becoming apparent is that important low-level effects, such as disruption of a hormone signalling system, may be hidden by higher levels of chemical exposure, which cause more obvious impacts that are easier to measure.

Reference

- *Stephen Lester, "Understanding 'Low Level' Chemical Exposures", Everyone's Backyard, Summer 2000*

24. Pentagon Seeks Mega-Mergers Between International Arms Corporations

A US Government task force has released its final report to the public, recommending globalisation of the US defence industry, even if it results in proliferation of conventional weapons.

The Defense Science Board (DSB) Task Force on Globalization and Security is a 27-member appointed board, composed mostly of Department of Defense (DoD) and private industry representatives. The DSB encourages the Pentagon to facilitate transnational mergers of defence corporations in order to avoid eventual conflicts with European countries over global arms market shares. Overall, the DSB Task Force advocates reducing the DoD's role in controlling arms exports.

A few large companies already dominate the American arms industry, and Europe's defence firms are rapidly consolidating as well. Germany's Daimler-Chrysler and France's Aérospatiale announced a planned merger to form the European Aeronautics, Defence and Space Co. (EADS), and BAE Systems now monopolises the UK defence industry.

Increased partnership between US and EU defence corporations is needed, DSB warns, to avoid a protectionist "Fortress America" from going to war with a hostile "Fortress Europe" over market share.

The Federation of American Scientists is concerned that transnational arms mergers will create very powerful defence companies, further shifting control away from governments and towards private industry.

Reference

- *Federation of American Scientists, "Arms Company of the Future: BoeingBAELockheedEADS, Inc?", Arms Sales Monitor, January 2000, www.fas.org*

25. Community Activists Outsit McDonald's

On Sunday December 13, 1998, local residents of Hinchley Wood, England, occupied the parking lot of their

local pub to prevent McDonald's from building on the site. Their 24-hours-a-day sit-in campaign lasted 18 months, received national publicity and galvanised community support against McDonald's.

The community organised to become Residents Against McDonald's (RAM). Their campaign forced McDonald's onto the defensive, stopping all work on the site. RAM exposed how local planning laws allow companies to steamroll over the wishes of communities, ignoring expressed concerns over the quality of local lives and environment.

When McDonald's leases or purchases neighbourhood pubs to avoid the usual local planning applications and guidelines, local residents become outraged and feel compelled to resist. This time the residents were successful.

After RAM's incredible 552-day continuous occupation, McDonald's threw in the towel and handed back the lease on the pub to the original owners. RAM celebrated an historic victory.

Reference

- *McLibel Support Campaign, "Residents defeat McDonald's after mammoth 552-day occupation", A-Infos New Service, June 16, 2000, www.mcspotlight.org*

...transnational arms mergers will create very powerful defence companies, further shifting control away from governments and towards private industry.